

## [Italian Shoe Machine Worker #7]

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Paper No. 7

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Interview with

Roland Damiani

. . .

by

Merton R. Lovett

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“From Memory”

Interview with Roland Damiani

BY Merton R. Lovett

. . .

(from memory)

“I do not think that all Italian Americans agree on Mussolini. Some approve of his policy. Others think he is too reckless and will drag Italy into war.

“I cannot answer for everyone. Personally all my loyalty is for this country. My interest in Italy is secondary. If a war should break out in the old country tomorrow, I do not think a dozen men would leave Beverly to fight.

“The admiration you speak of is confined mostly to the older people. They are naturally pleased to see Italy active, respected and powerful. The Italians are proud of their race and of its ancient history. The history of Rome means much to them.

“The answer to that is easy. A great many Italians belong to the American Legion. They have fought for America once. They would fight for this country again if necessary.

“We have succeeded in getting most of the Italians here to take out naturalization papers. They have taken the oath to defend the United States.

“Of course you are right Mr. Lovett. The young fellows are just as loyal Americans as any. They are as interested as your boy in American institutions. My youngster here will never

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feel any great affection for Italy. I hope he will make a fine engineer or lawyer or doctor. I hope he will never have to fight.

2

"There may be some Italian propaganda intended to win the support of Italian-Americans. I have not experienced any. Hardly anybody in Beverly reads an Italian newspaper.

"Hah! Hah! So it was rumored that Mussolini is responsible for the law which requires the teaching of Italian in City high schools? How could Mussolini influence the legislators here. Not many of them are Italians anyway.

"Yes I was one of those that urged the teaching of Italian at the High school. I thought that the Italian language was at least as important as French and German. The Italians have produced a great literature. It is the favorite language of singers.

"Well, supposing we do feel some racial pride. If you lived in Italy Mr. Lovett, would you lose all interest in English? Wouldn't you want your children to know a little about the masterpieces written in that language?

"I have worked for years in Americanization work. I believe in it. The results have been amazing. We have made good Americans out of Italian immigrants, and just as often out of the French, Germans, Russians and Greeks.

"Yes this work is also carried on at the United Shoe in noon classes.

"No, I don't believe that the company has any axe to grind. Certainly union leaders are as much in favor of Americanization as the Companies.

"That's right the more a man knows; the more happily and 3 successfully he lives with his neighbors, the better workman and citizen, he becomes.

"Do I play golf? No, but I have played at it.

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"Yes its a great game, but takes so much time and costs so much that few Italians have taken it up.

"The younger Italian-Americans are strong for baseball, football and bowling.

"Yes, I could name many other players. We are proud of those Italians who have played on the High School teams. Many of them were elected captains.

"I think "Buzz" Foley will be a good football coach.

"Sure some of the Italian-Americans hoped Flavio Tossi would get the job. He was a standout at Boston College and a great professional player.

"Perhaps you are right. Certainly a coach should have a good moral influence on the boys. If Tossi is a roughneck it is because of professional football. Anyway I don't think the Italians resent his failure to get the job. The Italian boys will be out there next fall, working for Coach Foley."